



"My book is about..." Its Mission Statement

by
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Can you state what your non-fiction book is about in one sentence? If not, you may not have a clear purpose or theme for your project and you run the risk of writing a book without a point to it. Completing the following sentence is not as easy as it sounds: "My book is about...." Unpublished authors take several tries to boil down their theme to a phrase and usually seek assistance from other writers. Once you have achieved this task, type up the sentence in bold letters, and stick it on top of your computer screen. It will act as an ongoing guide and a baseline against which you can measure everything you include in your book. Ask yourself: Does this section contribute to the theme or not? What does this paragraph add to my overriding purpose?

Books' **mission statements** develop from this single sentence and are used in many ways, such as:

- Discovering your book's angle;
- Writing query letters to agents/editors;
- Speaking to agents/editors at writers' conferences;
- Preparing your book proposal/synopsis;
- Writing catalogue blurbs;
- Writing promotional material for news releases, flyers, etc; and,
- Giving media interviews.

Your book's mission statement should run about 150 words and must generate excitement, clearly describe the subject and scope of the book, demonstrate its uniqueness, show its benefits and the features that deliver them (sidebars, templates, illustrations, etc.), identify the audience and, lastly, reveal the author's credentials. "All that in 150 words," I hear you wailing! Yes! It takes a lot of work and much rewriting but it is well worth it. Many aspiring authors say it clarifies their thoughts and helps them create a more marketable product.

Answering the following nine questions will help you develop your mission statement:

1. What problem will your book solve for its readers? (One only, in one sentence.)
2. Describe your typical reader in 2-3 words. (eg. Canadian writers)
3. What is the subject of your book? (One simple phrase)
4. What makes your book unique?
5. What makes your book better than others on the same subject?

6. Why is it a good time to have a book like yours available?
7. List the benefits of your book to its readers.
8. List the features that deliver the benefits.
9. Describe yourself in two words. (eg. author and speaker)

Good luck and, if need be, get some help from your writers' group or individuals who know your work-in-progress.

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Author and professional speaker, Julie H. Ferguson leads workshops that provide aspiring authors with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to approach publishers and succeed. Her workshops are available as downloadable booklets and as fully-narrated CD-ROMs through Beacon Literary Services at www.beaconlit.com, then click on Writers' Tools.